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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, today we praise Your name for the gift of life. We could not have awakened this morning without Your power. Yet so often we take our breath and heartbeats for granted.

Forgive us when we lose our awe for the miracle of life and fail to do our part to protect and sustain it. Give us wisdom to take care of the temples of our bodies and may our souls prosper as we experience physical well-being.

Lord, strengthen our Senators today. Keep them open to a growing faith and a maturing set of convictions. Help them to do with faithfulness that which lies to their hands, so that they may finish their race with joy.

Make each of us willing to pay the price for freedom.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SAM BROWNBACK led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 11, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWNBACK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning after 60 minutes of morning business we will resume debate on the highway bill. As I announced on several occasions, this is the second week for consideration of the bill. It is our hope to complete work this week.

Last night, cloture motions were filed to the substitute and the bill in an effort to bring the bill to conclusion this week. Today, we will make additional progress on the bill prior to those cloture votes, which will occur on Thursday. If cloture is invoked, there could be up to 30 hours remaining for consideration of the pending substitute amendment. Therefore, Senators should have ample time for debate and amendments. I hope we will not use all of the time and we could finish the bill at the earliest possible point in time.

We expect a busy session for the remainder of the week as we continue to make progress on the highway bill.

MIDDLE EAST VISIT—WEST BANK

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, over the recess last week, I had the opportunity

to travel to Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. Yesterday, I reported on the Israel leg of my fact-finding mission. Today I will continue briefly with that discussion of some of my observations of the West Bank.

It was an invaluable experience. I and my entire group learned a tremendous amount about the Palestinian perspective. Following my meetings in Jerusalem, we made our way to Ramallah in the West Bank to meet with the leadership of the Palestinian Authority. As we drove toward the city, we could see from our windows that everyday life for Palestinians in the West Bank is, indeed, a struggle. We had to pass through multiple checkpoints, predominantly through the security barrier, the so-called fence, much of which is newly constructed.

As I learned on my visit to the Middle East, the fence has been, in truth, very successful in preventing terrorist attacks, although it was quite remarkable that you had to stop and be checked out before passing this fence, which sometimes you had to cross multiple times.

We could also see the toll the Intifada has taken on the lives of the Palestinian people. Streets were pockmarked, buildings were run down, and a pall hung over the landscape itself. It is clear the Palestinians need one thing; that is, hope—hope for the future, hope for a better life, hope for a more secure life. They need their economic services improved. They need their social services improved. They need to believe there will be tangible benefits from choosing dialog over violence.

This view was reinforced during my meeting with Palestinian Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. I learned from him that the unemployment rate in the West Bank is officially 27 percent, but it far exceeds that number. The people are suffering. That is why I strongly support President Bush's efforts to increase assistance to the Palestinian

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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